A Time for War and the Calling of Peacemakers: Reconciling Conflict and Compassion in a Biblical Context

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August 18, 2024

The Bible presents a complex and often challenging relationship between the realities of war and the divine call to peacemaking. On one hand, Scripture acknowledges that war is an inevitable part of life in a fallen world, where justice sometimes demands confrontation and defense. Ecclesiastes 3:8 reflects this reality by declaring, "a time for war and a time for peace." On the other hand, the teachings of Jesus emphasize the blessedness of those who pursue peace, as seen in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." This tension between war and peace presents a profound challenge for believers, who are called to navigate these dual realities with wisdom, justice, and compassion. This paper explores the biblical framework for understanding the coexistence of war and peacemaking, examining how believers can reconcile these seemingly opposing forces within their lives, and offering insights on living out the call to be peacemakers in a world marked by conflict.

Keywords: war, peace, peacemakers, Ecclesiastes 3:8, Matthew 5:9, justice, mercy, conflict, reconciliation, biblical context, Christian living, divine guidance, discernment, Kingdom of God.

I. Introduction

A. The Duality of War and Peace in Scripture

The Bible presents a complex and often challenging portrayal of the human condition, where the realities of war and peace coexist within the broader narrative of God's interaction with humanity. Throughout Scripture, these two themes are juxtaposed in ways that reflect both the brokenness of the world and the divine call towards a higher, more peaceful order.

One of the most poignant expressions of this duality is found in Ecclesiastes 3:8, where the author famously declares, "a time for war and a time for peace." This verse is part of a larger passage that reflects on the cyclical nature of life, acknowledging that every experience, including conflict and reconciliation, has its appointed time. The inclusion of both war and peace within this passage underscores the reality that human history is marked by periods of strife as well as harmony. It also suggests that while war may be an inevitable part of the human experience, it is not the final word; peace too has its place and significance.

In stark contrast to the acknowledgment of war as part of the human condition, the New Testament introduces a powerful call to peacemaking, most notably in the words of Jesus during the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5:9, Jesus proclaims, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." This verse elevates the pursuit of peace to a divine mandate, where those who actively work towards reconciliation and harmony are not only blessed but also identified as true children of God. This pronouncement reflects the heart of Jesus' teachings, which consistently emphasize love, forgiveness, and the restoration of relationships.

The contrasting themes of war and peace in these two verses encapsulate a fundamental tension within the biblical narrative. On one hand, the Bible recognizes that war, with all its attendant suffering and destruction, is a reality in a fallen world. On the other hand, it also calls believers to be agents of peace, reflecting the character of God and the values of His Kingdom. This duality raises important questions about how believers are to understand and navigate the relationship between these seemingly opposing realities.

B. Thesis Statement

This paper seeks to explore the theological and ethical tension between the acknowledgment of war as a reality of human existence and the calling of believers to be peacemakers, as articulated in the Bible. By examining these themes through key scriptural passages and broader biblical principles, we will investigate how war and peace can be reconciled within a framework of faith, justice, and divine purpose.

The discussion will delve into the complexities of war in the biblical context, examining how it is portrayed as both a consequence of human sinfulness and, at times, an instrument of divine justice. Simultaneously, we will explore the high calling of peacemaking as central to the Christian vocation, grounded in the teachings of Jesus and the prophetic vision of a world where swords are turned into plowshares.

Ultimately, this paper aims to provide a deeper understanding of how believers can live out their faith in a world where conflict is often unavoidable, yet the call to peace remains ever-present. Through a careful examination of Scripture, we will seek to offer a framework for reconciling these dual realities, guiding believers in their pursuit of both justice and peace in a way that honors God's ultimate purpose for creation.

II. Biblical Perspectives on War

A. The Reality of War in a Fallen World

The Bible does not shy away from the harsh realities of human existence, and war is one of the most significant and troubling of these realities. Ecclesiastes 3:8 famously acknowledges that there is "a time for war and a time for peace," situating war within the broader context of the human experience. This verse is part of a larger passage that reflects on the inevitability of various seasons in life, suggesting that conflict, like peace, has its place in the unfolding narrative of human history.

In the context of a fallen world—a world marred by sin and human imperfection—war often emerges as a tragic but recurring element. The biblical

acknowledgment of "a time for war" reflects the understanding that, in a world where evil exists, conflict may become necessary to confront injustice, protect the innocent, or defend against aggression. Ecclesiastes 3:8 does not glorify war, but rather, it recognizes it as an inescapable part of the human condition.

The Old Testament provides several examples where war is portrayed as a necessary action, often within the framework of divine judgment or defense. For instance, the conquest of Canaan under Joshua's leadership is one of the most prominent examples of war in the Bible. The book of Joshua describes how the Israelites, under God's command, engage in a series of battles to take possession of the Promised Land. These wars are depicted as fulfilling God's promises to Israel and as acts of divine judgment against the Canaanite nations, who are described as having engaged in practices deemed abhorrent by God (Joshua 10:40).

Similarly, the battles fought by King David are often portrayed as necessary for establishing and defending the kingdom of Israel. David, who is described as a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14), leads Israel in wars against neighboring nations to secure peace and stability for his people. These wars, though brutal, are depicted as necessary for the survival and flourishing of Israel as God's chosen people.

In these examples, war is not sought for its own sake but is presented as a response to specific circumstances, often framed as a defense of divine justice or the fulfillment of God's promises. The reality of war in the Old Testament is thus closely tied to the broader narrative of God's relationship with His people and His intervention in human history. While war is recognized as a reality in a fallen world, the Bible also points towards a hope for a future where such conflict will no longer be necessary, and peace will prevail.

B. Divine Justice and Human Agency

The portrayal of war in the Bible is often linked to the concept of divine justice. In certain contexts, war is depicted as an instrument used by God to correct wrongdoing, punish wickedness, or protect the innocent. This perspective is seen in passages where God commands or sanctions war as a means of enacting His judgment against nations or individuals who have committed grievous sins.

For example, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19) is a divine act of judgment against cities that had become synonymous with sin and depravity. Similarly, the wars fought by the Israelites under Joshua and later by David are often portrayed as carrying out God's judgment against nations that had defied His laws and engaged in immoral practices. In these instances, war is not merely a human endeavor but is presented as a divine mandate, with the purpose of upholding justice and righteousness.

However, the role of human agency in the decision to go to war introduces significant moral complexities. While some wars in the Bible are depicted as directly commanded by God, others arise from human decisions and are subject to human motives and limitations. The story of King Saul's war against the Amalekites in 1 Samuel 15 illustrates the tension between divine command and human execution. Saul is instructed by God to completely destroy the Amalekites, but he disobeys by sparing their king and taking livestock as plunder. Saul's failure to fully carry out God's command leads to his rejection as king, highlighting the dangers of mixing divine justice with human ambition or pragmatism.

The moral complexities of war are further emphasized in the prophetic literature, where prophets like Isaiah and Amos critique the violence and injustice of war, calling the people of Israel to repentance and to seek peace. Isaiah 2:4 offers a vision of a future where "they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore." This prophetic hope challenges the inevitability of war and points towards a time when divine justice will be fully realized, not through violence but through peace and reconciliation.

In the New Testament, the teachings of Jesus further complicate the issue of war by emphasizing love, forgiveness, and nonviolence. Jesus' command to "turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5:39) and His blessing of the peacemakers (Matthew 5:9) suggest a radical departure from the Old Testament's more conditional acceptance of war. This shift calls believers to a higher standard of conduct, where the pursuit of peace becomes paramount, even in the face of conflict.

The role of human agency in the decision to go to war, therefore, must be carefully examined within the framework of divine justice. While the Bible acknowledges that war can sometimes serve a just purpose, it also warns against

the dangers of human pride, greed, and vengeance, which can distort the original intent of justice. The moral complexity of war in the biblical narrative invites believers to seek divine wisdom and discernment, ensuring that their actions align with God's will and the broader call to peace and reconciliation.

In summary, the biblical perspective on war is multifaceted, recognizing it as both a reality of a fallen world and, at times, an instrument of divine justice. However, the role of human agency introduces significant moral challenges, requiring careful discernment and a deep commitment to the principles of justice and peace. Through these perspectives, the Bible provides a framework for understanding the complexities of war and the divine call to pursue peace in a world marked by conflict.

III. The Calling of Peacemakers

A. The Beatitudes and the Role of Peacemakers

The Sermon on the Mount, delivered by Jesus and recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, stands as one of the most profound and challenging teachings in the New Testament. Central to this sermon are the Beatitudes, a series of blessings that outline the characteristics of those who are truly aligned with God's Kingdom. Among these, Matthew 5:9 declares, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

This verse carries immense significance, both in its immediate meaning and in its broader implications for Christian living. To be called a "peacemaker" is to be recognized as someone who actively works to bring about reconciliation and harmony in relationships, communities, and the world at large. It goes beyond merely avoiding conflict; it involves the proactive pursuit of peace, often requiring difficult conversations, sacrifices, and a commitment to justice.

The promise attached to this beatitude—that peacemakers "will be called children of God"—is particularly powerful. In biblical terms, to be a "child of God" is to share in the divine nature and to reflect the character of God in one's actions. The title "children of God" signifies a close, intimate relationship with the Creator, marked by a life that embodies God's values and purposes. Peacemakers,

therefore, are not only blessed for their actions but are also identified as bearing the family resemblance to God, who is Himself the ultimate source of peace.

The broader context of the Beatitudes further underscores the role of peacemakers within the framework of Christian ethics. The Beatitudes, found in Matthew 5:3-12, outline the characteristics of those who are truly blessed in the eyes of God. They emphasize humility, mercy, righteousness, and a hunger for justice—qualities that are essential for anyone seeking to be a peacemaker. For example, the Beatitudes begin with "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3), highlighting the importance of humility and dependence on God as foundational for a life that seeks peace.

Moreover, the Beatitudes emphasize the value of mercy, as seen in "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" (Matthew 5:7). Mercy is a crucial component of peacemaking, as it involves extending forgiveness and compassion to others, even when they have wronged us. Righteousness is also central to peacemaking, as it ensures that the pursuit of peace is grounded in justice and truth, rather than simply avoiding conflict or appeasing others.

In this way, the Beatitudes serve as a comprehensive guide for Christian living, with peacemaking at its heart. They call believers to embody the values of God's Kingdom, where peace, justice, and mercy reign supreme. By living out these principles, Christians are not only blessed but also contribute to the manifestation of God's peace in the world.

B. Peacemaking as a Divine Mandate

The call to be a peacemaker is not merely a suggestion or an optional aspect of Christian living; it is a divine mandate, woven into the fabric of Scripture. The Bible presents numerous examples of individuals who embodied this calling, demonstrating that peacemaking is a central aspect of God's plan for His people.

One of the most significant examples of a peacemaker in the Bible is Jesus Himself. Throughout His ministry, Jesus consistently sought to bring peace—between individuals, within communities, and ultimately between humanity and God. His teachings on love, forgiveness, and reconciliation are foundational to the Christian understanding of peacemaking. For example, in Matthew 5:44, Jesus commands, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,"

challenging His followers to break the cycle of violence and retaliation by responding to hatred with love.

Jesus also exemplified peacemaking in His interactions with others. In John 8:1-11, when a woman caught in adultery was brought before Him, Jesus diffused a potentially violent situation by challenging those without sin to cast the first stone. Through His wisdom and compassion, He brought peace to a situation marked by judgment and hostility. In this and many other instances, Jesus demonstrated that true peacemaking often involves standing up for the vulnerable and working to transform situations of conflict into opportunities for reconciliation.

Another biblical example of peacemaking can be found in the story of Solomon's wisdom in resolving conflicts. In 1 Kings 3:16-28, Solomon is presented with a difficult case involving two women who both claim to be the mother of a living child. Solomon's famous decision to suggest dividing the child in two reveals his deep understanding of human nature and his commitment to justice. His wisdom brought peace to a potentially volatile situation, demonstrating the importance of discernment and fairness in peacemaking.

The Bible also presents peacemaking as a spiritual and moral imperative for all believers. In Romans 12:18, Paul exhorts the early Christians, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." This verse underscores the responsibility of believers to pursue peace in their relationships, even when it is difficult. While recognizing that peace is not always possible due to the complexities of human interactions, the verse encourages believers to make every effort to be agents of reconciliation and harmony.

The importance of peacemaking is further emphasized in the letter to the Hebrews, where believers are instructed to "make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness, no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). This verse links the pursuit of peace with holiness, suggesting that living in peace with others is an essential aspect of living a life that is pleasing to God.

In a world where conflict and division are prevalent, the call to be a peacemaker is both challenging and crucial. It requires believers to actively work towards reconciliation, to address injustices, and to seek the well-being of others, even

when it is costly. Peacemaking involves not only resolving conflicts but also creating environments where peace can flourish—within families, communities, and society at large.

In summary, the calling of peacemakers, as articulated in the Beatitudes and throughout Scripture, is a divine mandate that reflects the heart of God's Kingdom. Peacemakers are blessed and honored as children of God, called to embody His values of mercy, righteousness, and justice. Through the examples of Jesus, Solomon, and others, the Bible provides a model for how believers can fulfill this calling, working to bring peace and reconciliation in a world marked by conflict. This mandate challenges Christians to be active agents of peace, living out their faith in ways that contribute to the healing and restoration of relationships and communities.

IV. Reconciling War and Peacemaking

A. The Tension Between Justice and Mercy

At the heart of the biblical narrative lies the profound tension between justice and mercy, two attributes that are both central to God's character. This tension reflects the complexity of God's dealings with humanity and presents a significant challenge for believers who are called to embody both justice and mercy in their lives.

Justice in the biblical sense is about upholding what is right, protecting the innocent, and ensuring that wrongdoing is addressed. It is closely tied to the concept of righteousness, where God's justice ensures that moral order is maintained, and evil is punished. The Bible is replete with examples of God's justice in action, from the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19) to the laws given to Israel to govern society justly (Exodus 20-23). God's justice is unwavering, and it reflects His commitment to righteousness and truth.

Mercy, on the other hand, is the compassionate treatment of those who do not deserve it. It involves forgiveness, patience, and a willingness to withhold punishment in favor of offering a second chance. Mercy is equally a part of God's character, as seen in passages like Psalm 103:8, which declares, "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love." The New

Testament further emphasizes mercy, especially in the teachings of Jesus, who often spoke of the importance of forgiving others as God has forgiven us (Matthew 6:14-15).

The challenge for believers arises in situations where the demands of justice and mercy seem to conflict. This is particularly evident in the context of war and peacemaking. On one hand, there are circumstances where justice may require confrontation, defense, or even conflict to protect the innocent and uphold what is right. For example, wars in the Old Testament are often depicted as necessary actions to enforce justice, such as in the case of Israel's battles against oppressing nations (Judges 2:16-18).

On the other hand, the call to be peacemakers, as articulated by Jesus in Matthew 5:9, emphasizes the importance of mercy, reconciliation, and the pursuit of peace. Peacemaking involves working to resolve conflicts, restore relationships, and create harmony, often requiring believers to set aside their right to vengeance or retribution in favor of seeking peace. This reflects the mercy of God, who desires restoration and reconciliation even for those who have wronged others.

The tension between justice and mercy becomes a practical challenge for believers when they must decide how to act in situations of conflict or injustice. Should they pursue justice, potentially through confrontation or defense, or should they prioritize mercy, seeking to forgive and make peace? This tension is not easily resolved and requires a deep understanding of both attributes as they relate to God's character.

The Bible does not offer a simplistic solution to this tension but instead calls believers to hold both justice and mercy together in their actions. Micah 6:8 captures this balance well: "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." This verse highlights the need to pursue justice while also loving mercy, recognizing that both are essential to living a life that reflects God's will.

The challenge for believers is to discern when and how to apply justice and mercy in a way that honors God and promotes His Kingdom values. This requires wisdom, humility, and a willingness to seek God's guidance in difficult situations. It also involves recognizing that sometimes justice and mercy are not mutually

exclusive but can be pursued together, as when a just resolution includes elements of mercy, such as offering forgiveness or working towards reconciliation.

B. The Role of Discernment and Divine Guidance

Given the complexity of balancing justice and mercy, the role of **discernment** and **divine guidance** is crucial. Believers are called to seek God's wisdom in navigating the challenges of life, particularly when it comes to decisions that involve conflict, justice, and peacemaking.

Proverbs 3:5-6 offers a foundational principle for this discernment: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." This passage emphasizes the importance of relying on God's wisdom rather than solely on human judgment. By submitting to God's guidance, believers can navigate the complexities of life with the assurance that God will direct their paths toward justice and peace.

The need for divine wisdom is particularly evident in situations where the right course of action is not immediately clear. For example, in conflicts where both justice and mercy are at stake, believers must carefully discern when to act decisively to uphold justice and when to extend mercy to seek reconciliation. This discernment is not always straightforward and often requires prayer, reflection on Scripture, and seeking counsel from other believers.

One of the most striking examples of divine wisdom in action is found in the story of **King Solomon's prayer for wisdom**. In 1 Kings 3:9, Solomon prays, "So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong." Solomon recognizes that leading the nation of Israel and making just decisions requires more than human understanding; it requires divine insight. God responds to Solomon's prayer by granting him exceptional wisdom, which becomes evident in his judgments, including the famous case of the two women claiming to be the mother of the same child (1 Kings 3:16-28). Solomon's wisdom allows him to discern the truth and bring about a just resolution that also preserves peace.

This example of Solomon serves as a model for modern believers facing dilemmas that require a balance of justice and mercy. In today's world, where conflicts often arise within families, communities, and nations, the need for discernment is as pressing as ever. Whether dealing with personal disputes, social injustices, or global conflicts, believers are called to seek God's wisdom in determining the most faithful course of action.

Divine guidance also involves being attuned to the leading of the Holy Spirit, who helps believers understand the nuances of justice and mercy in each situation. The New Testament speaks of the Spirit as a counselor and guide (John 14:26), who empowers believers to live out God's will in their daily lives. Through prayer and attentiveness to the Spirit's prompting, believers can gain the insight needed to act in ways that reflect both justice and mercy.

In addition to personal discernment, the Bible encourages believers to seek wisdom collectively, through the counsel of others in the Christian community. Proverbs 11:14 states, "Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors, there is safety." This highlights the importance of community in the discernment process, where believers can support one another in making difficult decisions, ensuring that their actions align with God's principles.

In summary, the reconciliation of war and peacemaking within the Christian life requires a delicate balance of justice and mercy, both of which are central to God's character. Believers are called to embody both attributes, recognizing the challenge of applying them in a fallen world. Discernment and divine guidance are essential tools in navigating this tension, enabling believers to seek God's wisdom in their decisions and to act in ways that honor His call to be peacemakers. Through prayer, reflection, and community support, believers can find the path that upholds both justice and peace, reflecting the heart of God in their actions and relationships.

V. The Eschatological Vision of Peace

A. The Prophetic Hope for Peace

The Bible, while acknowledging the realities of war and conflict in a fallen world, also holds out a powerful and hopeful vision of a future where peace reigns supreme. This eschatological vision, rooted in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament, points to a time when the destructive forces of war will be completely eradicated, and humanity will live in harmony under God's just and peaceful rule.

One of the most vivid and enduring images of this future peace is found in Isaiah 2:4, where the prophet Isaiah proclaims, *"He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore."* This passage is a cornerstone of the biblical hope for peace, envisioning a time when the tools of war are transformed into instruments of cultivation and life. The imagery of swords being beaten into plowshares symbolizes not only the end of conflict but also the redirection of human energy towards productive and life-giving endeavors.

This prophetic hope is not just a distant dream but is presented as a concrete reality that will be brought about through the intervention of God. The vision of peace in Isaiah 2:4 is closely linked to the idea of divine judgment and justice, where God Himself will act as the ultimate judge and arbiter among nations. This implies that true and lasting peace can only be achieved through the establishment of God's justice, where disputes are resolved fairly, and the root causes of conflict—such as injustice, oppression, and inequality—are addressed.

The role of the Messiah as the Prince of Peace is central to this eschatological vision. Isaiah 9:6 offers a profound description of the coming Messiah, stating, *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."* This passage presents the Messiah not only as a political and spiritual leader but as the one who will bring about the ultimate fulfillment of peace on earth.

The title "Prince of Peace" highlights the Messiah's mission to establish and maintain peace. This peace is not merely the absence of conflict but a

comprehensive well-being that encompasses justice, righteousness, and the flourishing of all creation. The Messiah's reign, as depicted in Isaiah 9:7, will be marked by endless peace, with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. This vision is one of cosmic reconciliation, where all things are brought into harmony under the Messiah's rule.

The ultimate fulfillment of peace in the Kingdom of God is a recurring theme throughout the prophetic writings and the New Testament. In the Book of Revelation, the final chapters describe a new heaven and a new earth where there is no more death, mourning, crying, or pain (Revelation 21:4). This eschatological vision culminates in the full realization of God's Kingdom, where peace, justice, and love are perfectly embodied, and where God's presence dwells fully with His people.

This prophetic hope for peace serves as both a comfort and a challenge for believers. It provides the assurance that, despite the present realities of war and conflict, God's ultimate plan is one of peace and restoration. At the same time, it challenges believers to live in anticipation of this future, striving to reflect the values of God's Kingdom in the here and now.

B. The Christian's Role in Anticipating God's Kingdom

The eschatological vision of peace presented in Scripture is not only a future hope but also a present calling for believers. Christians are called to actively participate in the realization of God's Kingdom on earth, working towards peace, justice, and reconciliation as a reflection of the coming Kingdom. This anticipatory role is central to the Christian vocation and is rooted in the belief that the Kingdom of God has already been inaugurated through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, even as its full consummation is yet to come.

Believers are called to embody the values of the Kingdom in their daily lives, living as ambassadors of peace in a world often marked by division and strife. This calling is grounded in the teachings of Jesus, who consistently emphasized the importance of peacemaking as an integral part of discipleship. In Matthew 5:9, Jesus declares, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." This beatitude not only affirms the importance of peacemaking but also highlights the identity of peacemakers as children of God—those who reflect the character and mission of their Heavenly Father.

The active role of peacemakers in building a just and peaceful society is a critical aspect of anticipating God's final reconciliation. Peacemakers are called to address the root causes of conflict, such as injustice, inequality, and oppression, working to create conditions where peace can flourish. This involves both personal and collective actions, ranging from promoting forgiveness and reconciliation in interpersonal relationships to advocating for systemic change in society.

The work of peacemaking is also deeply connected to the concept of justice. As the prophets and the teachings of Jesus make clear, peace without justice is incomplete. True peace requires that wrongs be righted, the marginalized be uplifted, and the oppressed be set free. Isaiah 32:17 articulates this connection beautifully: "The fruit of that righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever." Righteousness—or justice—leads to peace, suggesting that the pursuit of peace must go hand in hand with the pursuit of justice.

In addition to their active work in the world, believers are called to be witnesses to the eschatological hope of peace. This involves living in a way that reflects the peace of Christ, even in the midst of a turbulent and conflicted world. Philippians 4:7 speaks of "the peace of God, which transcends all understanding," guarding the hearts and minds of believers in Christ Jesus. This inner peace, rooted in a relationship with God, empowers believers to be agents of peace in the world, offering a foretaste of the Kingdom to come.

Moreover, the anticipation of God's Kingdom motivates believers to persevere in their efforts to build peace, even when faced with obstacles and setbacks. The vision of a future where swords are turned into plowshares and the Messiah reigns as the Prince of Peace provides the ultimate assurance that their labor is not in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:58 encourages believers to "stand firm" and to "always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." This assurance empowers believers to continue striving for peace, knowing that their efforts contribute to the unfolding of God's redemptive plan.

In summary, the eschatological vision of peace presented in Scripture offers both a future hope and a present calling for believers. The prophetic hope for peace, as

seen in passages like Isaiah 2:4 and Isaiah 9:6, points to a time when conflict will be no more, and God's justice and peace will reign supreme. In the meantime, Christians are called to anticipate this coming Kingdom by actively working towards peace on earth, embodying the values of justice, mercy, and reconciliation. Through their efforts, believers participate in the realization of God's eschatological vision, reflecting the peace of Christ in a world that desperately needs it.

VI. Conclusion

A. Summary of Key Insights

Throughout this exploration of the dual realities of war and peace in Scripture, we have delved into the complex and sometimes paradoxical nature of these themes within the biblical narrative. The Bible presents war as an unfortunate but real aspect of life in a fallen world, acknowledging that conflict, driven by human sin and the need for justice, is sometimes unavoidable. Ecclesiastes 3:8, with its declaration of "a time for war and a time for peace," encapsulates this reality, highlighting that different seasons in life call for different responses, including the difficult decision to engage in conflict when necessary.

At the same time, Scripture consistently elevates the pursuit of peace as a central tenet of the Christian faith. Jesus' proclamation in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God," underscores the importance of peacemaking as a reflection of God's character and a hallmark of those who belong to His Kingdom. The Bible presents peacemaking not just as an ideal to be admired but as an active, ongoing commitment that requires courage, wisdom, and a deep understanding of justice and mercy.

The tension between these two realities—war as a sometimes necessary response to injustice, and peace as the ultimate goal and calling of God's people—presents a significant challenge for believers. Navigating these tensions requires a careful balance of justice and mercy, guided by discernment and divine wisdom. Believers are called to embody both attributes, recognizing that while the pursuit of justice may sometimes lead to conflict, the ultimate aim is always peace, reconciliation, and the restoration of right relationships.

B. Reflection on the Christian Call to Peacemaking

The call to peacemaking is one of the most profound and challenging aspects of the Christian life. It requires believers to actively work towards reconciliation, justice, and harmony in a world where division, conflict, and injustice are pervasive. This calling is rooted in the character of God, who is both just and merciful, and in the teachings of Jesus, who emphasized the importance of forgiveness, love, and peacemaking as central to the life of a disciple.

However, the Christian call to peacemaking must be understood in the context of a fallen world where the complexities of justice often lead to difficult moral and ethical decisions. Peacemaking is not a passive or simplistic endeavor; it involves confronting evil, addressing injustice, and sometimes engaging in difficult conversations or actions to bring about true peace. As such, peacemaking requires both courage and wisdom, as believers seek to reflect the justice and mercy of God in their actions.

Believers are encouraged to embrace this calling with the understanding that true peace is not merely the absence of conflict but the presence of justice, righteousness, and right relationships. Peacemaking involves the restoration of what is broken, the healing of wounds, and the pursuit of a world where God's shalom—His perfect peace—reigns. This calling is not just for those in positions of power or influence but for every believer, as each person has a role to play in bringing about peace in their families, communities, and the world.

C. Call to Action

In light of the dual realities of war and peace and the Christian call to peacemaking, believers are challenged to seek God's wisdom in discerning how to live out these principles in their own lives and communities. This challenge is not one that can be taken lightly, as it involves deep spiritual reflection, prayer, and a commitment to aligning one's life with the values of God's Kingdom.

Believers are called to examine their own lives and ask themselves how they can be active agents of peace in their spheres of influence. This may involve advocating for justice in situations of injustice, seeking reconciliation in broken relationships, or working to create environments where peace and harmony can flourish. It also involves recognizing the need for humility and a willingness to

listen to others, understanding that peacemaking often requires patience, perseverance, and a readiness to forgive.

Moreover, believers are encouraged to seek God's guidance in discerning when to pursue justice and when to extend mercy, recognizing that these two attributes are not mutually exclusive but are both essential to true peacemaking. This discernment requires a deep reliance on the Holy Spirit, who provides the wisdom and strength needed to navigate the complexities of life in a fallen world.

Finally, believers are called to engage with their communities, both within the church and beyond, to foster a culture of peace and justice. This may involve participating in community initiatives, supporting efforts to address systemic injustices, or simply being a presence of peace in their everyday interactions. By living out the dual callings of justice and peace, believers can contribute to the realization of God's Kingdom on earth, offering a foretaste of the ultimate peace that will one day be fully realized in the new heaven and new earth.

In conclusion, the journey of peacemaking is one that requires faith, wisdom, and a deep commitment to living out the values of God's Kingdom. As believers navigate the tensions between war and peace, justice and mercy, they are called to trust in God's guidance and to actively participate in His redemptive work in the world. Through their efforts, they reflect the heart of God, who desires peace and reconciliation for all of His creation.